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*Part One: Opening and Preliminary Session*

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## Significance of the Research Topic and the Symposium

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Masaya Shiraishi Professor, Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University

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### 1. Overview of Japanese Policy toward Indochina during the Second World War

Many historians usually view the Second World War as having started in Europe in September 1939 when the Germans invaded Poland, and spread from there to the Asia-Pacific region in December 1941, when the Japanese landed in British Malaya and attacked Pearl Harbor, thus turning it into a world-wide war. This view is based on the assumption that the Second War was primarily a confrontation between the Allied Forces, whose key players were the United States and Great Britain, and the Axis Powers Japan, Germany and Italy.

Nevertheless, in East Asia, the war had already started in the early 1930s. Some historians prefer the term “15-Year War” to emphasize that the Japanese war of aggression began with the Manchurian Incident (1931–), which expanded to the Second Sino-Japanese War (1936–) and finally to the Asia-Pacific War (1941–). And we use the term “Asia-Pacific War,” instead of “the Pacific War,” to highlight the fact that Japan tried to establish its sphere of influence in Asia, spreading its military forces to the neighboring countries, while it militarily confronted the United States across the Pacific Ocean.

In the course of Japan’s escalation of war from continental China to cover the whole region of the Asia-Pacific, its policy toward French Indochina in the years of 1940 and 1941 was decisively important. Major events during these two years were as follows:

July 1940, six days after the French surrender to Germany, Japan made the French accept the border inspection team (the Nishihara Mission) in Indochina.

August 1940, the Matsuoka-Henry agreement was signed in Tokyo, whereby the French basically agreed to Japan’s special economic and military privileges in Indochina.

September 1940, Japanese troops moved into the northern part of Indochina.

February 1941, Japan hosted a mediation meeting in Tokyo between France and Thailand concerning the border disputes in Indochina; the peace treaty was concluded in May 1941.

May 1941, the delegations of Japan and France signed the Tariff and Trade Agreement and the Settlement and Navigation Agreement between Japan and Indochina.

July 1941, the stationing of Japanese troops began in the southern part of Indochina.

September 1941, the Japanese government sent its first team to conduct investigations of natural resources in Indochina.

November 1941, the Japanese army established the general headquarters of the Southern Regional Army in Saigon.

November 1941, the Japanese government established its Embassy in Hanoi, and dispatched Ambassador Kenkichi Yoshizawa.

Thus, during the period 1940–41, Japan made military and economic demands one after another, and each time obtained an agreement from the French government and Indochinese authorities. As a result, even without engaging the French in a war, Japan could include Indochina within its sphere of influence, and was able to establish a stronghold for its future military deployments to the rest of Southeast Asia.

However, these Japanese actions provoked and alarmed the Allied countries, and negotiations between Japan and the United States to avoid direct military confrontation became more and more difficult.

Finally, in December 1941, Japan launched an invasion of the rest of Southeast Asia, and opened a full-scale war with the Allied countries. However, in Indochina, Japan continued its policy of “keeping the status quo,” whose basic framework was established over the previous two years. This policy meant, in short, respect for French sovereignty in Indochina, but only as long as the French satisfied the Japanese military and economic demands there. Thus, Indochina remained the only colony still ruled by a Western power in a region where the Japanese had declared the establishment of the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.”

The “status quo” in Indochina remained intact until the final stage of the war. However, the French capital Paris was liberated by the Allied forces in August 1944 and the Philippines was recaptured by the Americans in December. The Japanese leaders began to seriously worry about the changing attitude of the French in Indochina. Thus, in March 1945, the Japanese in Indochina made a surprise attack against the French colonial troops.

With this *coup de force* (known as Operation Meigo), the Japanese military leaders seized power from the French Governor-General and placed the entire territory of Indochina under their control, while making the kings of Annam, Cambodia and Laos declare their “independence” from French rule. As for the kingdom of “Annam,” some Japanese military leaders in Saigon had a plan to enthrone Cường Để, an exiled prince living in Japan, and under this new emperor, establish a new government whose prime minister would be Ngô Đình Diệm. However, the top Japanese leaders let the existing Emperor Bảo Đại keep the throne and establish a new cabinet under Trần Trọng Kim. Japanese military rule in Indochina finally came to an end in August 1945, when Japan surrendered to the Allied countries.

## **2. Our Research Project on Indochina and Japan During the Second World War**

What kind of relationship did Japan have with Indochina during the Second World War? What changes took place in the Indochinese countries during the Japanese military presence, and how did they lead to new developments there after the end of the war? These questions have been always important topics to Japanese researchers working on the modern history of Indochina. Despite the im-

portance of this topic, however, for various reasons it was not until quite recently that we were able to organize a full-fledged joint research project. In 2013, two years ago, a joint project was launched, with the financial support (Kakenhi=Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research) of the Japanese Ministry of Education and Science/JSPS (Japan Society of Promotion of Science).

Our Project Kakenhi Basic (A) “Comprehensive Study for New Developments in Japan–French Indochina–Vietnam Relations during the Second World War” (project number 25243007) will last four-and-a-half years from November 2013 to March 2018. Its core members are ten Japanese researchers as listed below:

Masaya Shiraishi (Professor at Waseda University): Project Leader

Motoo Furuta (Professor at Tokyo University): Vietnam

Eiji Murashima (Professor at Waseda University): Thailand and Laos

Shinzo Hayase (Professor at Waseda University): Japan's War-time Southeast Asia Policy

Kyoichi Tachikawa (Chief of Military History Division, National Institute of Defense Studies):  
Japan–French Indochina Relations

Hideo Sasagawa (Professor at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University): Cambodia

Jun'ichi Iwatsuki (Associate Professor at Tokyo University): Vietnam

Yoko Kikuchi (Associate Professor at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies): Laos and Thailand

Chizuru Namba (Associate Professor at Keio University): France's Indochina Policy

Eiko Yuyama (Assistant Professor at Hokkaido University): Japan's Economic Policy and Activities toward French Indochina

In December last year, we held a small international workshop at Waseda University. Its participants were nine researchers from Vietnam, Thailand, People's Republic of China, Taiwan and France, as well as a special guest speaker, Prof. Ken'ichiro Hirano, together with the ten Japanese core members of our Project. The main purpose of the Workshop was to provide an overview on the major scholarship on the topic existing in these particular countries and to share information about the holdings of archival documents in each country. The Workshop proceedings, written both in English and Japanese, were printed in March of this year as a monograph of Waseda University's Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies.<sup>1</sup> We have brought along several copies of the proceedings for your reference, and in the near future, we intend to put its digital version on the Internet through the Waseda University Central Library repository.

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<sup>1</sup> Masaya Shiraishi ed., *Indochina, Thailand, Japan and France during World War II: Overview of Existing Literature and Related Documents for the Future Development of Researches*, Waseda Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Tokyo, March 2015/白石昌也編『第二次世界大戦期のインドシナ・タイ、そして日本・フランスに関する研究蓄積と一次資料の概観—研究のさらなる進展を目指して』早稲田大学アジア太平洋研究センター、2015年3月 (ISBN: 978-4-902590-40-1)。

### **3. International Symposium in Hanoi in September 2015 and the Future Prospects**

Based on the achievements of last year's International Workshop at Waseda University, we have strongly wished to hold an international symposium in Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam, on the occasion of the 70th year since the end of the Second World War. The symposium is intended to bring our research results together for mutual discussion and to share information and knowledge.

It is our greatest pleasure and honor to be present here as the co-organizer of the Symposium, which is hosted by the Hanoi University of Social Sciences and Humanities, National University of Vietnam, and financially subsidized by our Kakenhi project and the Japan Foundation.

In the existing research so far, political and diplomatic aspects of the topic have been much studied, such as the policymaking process for Indochina among Japanese leaders, diplomatic negotiations between the Japanese and French authorities, and the development of the national liberation movement by the Việt Minh forces. What is necessary for us from now on is to pay more attention to economic, social and cultural aspects, while further deepening our understanding of political, diplomatic and military history.

We really hope that this two-day symposium will be a new starting point to further promote our research activities. At the same time, we sincerely wish that this symposium may contribute to development of our mutual understanding and the further enhancement of intimate relations between the two nations of Japan and Vietnam. It is always indispensable to look back into history and learn precious lessons from the past, in order to build a better future.

Before concluding my speech, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Nguyễn Văn Khánh, Rector of the Hanoi University of Social Sciences and Humanities, and all the members of the University's Organizing Committee, who have successfully organized this Symposium; Mr. Jun Yanagi, Minister of the Japanese Embassy in Vietnam, and Mr. Toshiki Ando, Director of the Japan Foundation Center for Cultural Exchange in Vietnam, who gave the welcome address at the Opening Session; and two keynote speakers, Prof. Nguyễn Văn Kim and Prof. Ken'ichiro Hirano; as well as all the paper presenters and participants of the Symposium.

Thank you very much.